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## Viewing cable 09BUENOSAIRES602, ARGENTINA: AMBASSADOR THANKS MOJ FOR LAW

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09BUENOSAIRES602</a>	<a href="#">2009-05-21 22:19</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Buenos Aires</a>

Appears in these articles:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000602

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2024  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KTIP](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [EFIN](#) [KCRM](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: AMBASSADOR THANKS MOJ FOR LAW  
ENFORCEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS COOPERATION IN FAREWELL CALL

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 599

1B. 08 BUENOS AIRES 1705

1C. BUENOS AIRES 102

1D. BUENOS AIRES 35

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. On May 20, the Ambassador paid a farewell call on Minister of Justice Anibal Fernandez and thanked him for the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) collaboration in promoting human rights and addressing international crime, including drug trafficking, trafficking in persons (TIP), money laundering, and terrorism finance. The Minister thanked the Ambassador for the USG's excellent cooperation in law enforcement issues and noted the progress the Government of Argentina (GoA) is making in fighting TIP and drugs. He accepted the Ambassador's offers of additional training opportunities in the area of bulk cash smuggling and hostage-taking crisis management as well as proposed counterdrug bilateral exchanges sponsored by Southern Command. The Ambassador informed Fernandez that he would soon sign in a low-profile ceremony with Central Bank President Redrado an agreement to provide technical assistance to Argentine regulators, focused on enhancing the prevention and detection of terrorism finance.

12. (C) After the meeting, the Minister and Ambassador jointly addressed the press where both underscored the importance of working together to fight crime. The Minister also used the press opportunity to defend a recent court verdict to uphold the ruling Victory Front's (FPV) decision to run symbolic candidates in the midterm elections. In the press event, the Ambassador and Minister both made strong statements against recent anti-Semitic violence (ref A). End summary.

The GoA Makes Progress Against TIP...

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13. (C) The Ambassador thanked Minister Fernandez for the excellent human rights cooperation from the MOJ's National Anti-Discrimination Institute (ref B) and its cooperation in fighting TIP. He informed the Minister that the Department's TIP report would be published in June, and that it would likely note Argentina's progress to date. He said that the report would also reiterate the need to prosecute, convict, and sentence those involved in TIP crimes and to provide more care options for those freed from trafficking situations. The Ambassador recalled a previous conversation with the Minister, where Fernandez had indicated that the judicial sector needed to do more to convict human traffickers. He offered USG support to assist GoA efforts to strengthen judicial capacity to convict these crimes.

14. (C) The Ambassador then noted that the Department had approved a proposal by TIP activist and 2007 International Woman of Courage Award Winner Susana Trimarco to set up specialized anti-trafficking units at the provincial level. Minister Fernandez welcomed the news and asserted that the MOJ gives Trimarco's anti-TIP foundation 100,000 pesos (about US\$27,000) every two months to pay for the foundation's victim's assistance programs.

15. (C) Fernandez proudly informed the Ambassador that the MOJ's specialized TIP units had conducted 177 raids, made 206 arrests, and rescued 287 TIP victims, including 90 minors. He reiterated the need to train judges on the specifics of the new anti-TIP law, and recalled a case where a judge tried to prosecute a TIP victim who had been forced to abort a child in the brothel where she was exploited.

...but Changing Cultural Attitudes an Uphill Battle

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16. (C) Fernandez stated that the GoA's TIP public awareness campaign would begin soon. Fernandez underscored the need to change cultural attitudes that accept the sexual exploitation

of women and children as normal. He explained that the sexual exploitation of women has long been glorified in Argentine tango lyrics, and recalled one song that even talked about police complicity with brothel owners. The

Minister recounted that in the Interior provinces, some parents will voluntarily hand over their virgin daughters to satisfy the demands of landowners.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador then noted recent press reports that alleged TIP activity taking place in brothels in the Kirchners' hometown province of Santa Cruz (reftel). Fernandez claimed that federal and provincial authorities were working together to collect criminal intelligence to crack down on illicit TIP activity taking place in brothels. Poloff noted that the press quoted provincial authorities explaining that the brothels serve a purpose for lonely workers and helped keep the number of rape crimes down. She added that this suggests a need for greater awareness among provincial authorities on how TIP and prostitution can intersect and that prostitution is not the best way to prevent rape.

¶8. (C) The Minister argued that the brothels in Santa Cruz have helped prevent rape. He explained that most of Santa Cruz's residents emigrated to the province where they work primarily in the oil and gas industries. He said these workers ""make a lot of money, and if they do not have a place to spend the money, they are likely to rape women to satisfy their desires."" When poloff noted that Argentine federal law prohibited brothels, the Minister asserted that each province has the right to decide whether brothels are legal or not, and that brothels are legal in Santa Cruz. That said, there should be good regulations of legal brothels to ensure there is no trafficking underway.

¶9. (C) The Minister reiterated that the government has an uphill battle in changing cultural attitudes, particularly in the interior provinces. He then disclosed to the Ambassador

that he personally believed that the Aleh family, a prominent family in Tucuman province, was behind the 2003 kidnapping of Susana Trimarco's daughter, Marita Veron. Fernandez referred to the Ale patriarch as Argentina's very own "godfather" who in an effort to launder his money from illicit activities is now President of Tucuman's soccer club, Club Atletico San Martin. Fernandez said he felt sure they were involved in the Veron kidnapping, but lamented that he "can not prove it."

#### MOJ Accepts Counternarcotics Training and Exchanges

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¶10. (C) The Ambassador thanked the Minister for the MoJ's continued cooperation to fight drugs. He indicated that Southern Command officials were interested in visiting Argentina to meet with their Border Patrol and Coast Guard counterparts and would like to invite the MoJ to send a General-equivalent from each of these agencies to visit the Joint Interagency Counterdrug Task Force in Key West, Florida and other national counterdrug agencies in Washington, DC. The Ambassador also offered a training program in managing a hostage-taking crisis sponsored by the Embassy's Military Group. The Minister accepted the offers and expressed appreciation for these types of bilateral exchanges and training programs.

#### ...but Notes Challenges in Winning the War on Drugs

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¶11. (C) Fernandez said that he does "not want to delude anyone that the government can win the battle against drugs" but emphasized the GoA would persist in its efforts. Asked by the Ambassador about efforts to control precursor chemicals, Fernandez noted the recent arrest of Mario Roberto Segovia, the so-called "king of ephedrine" and disclosed that the MoJ is working on a case that would be finalized in the next 30 days. He pointed to the challenging economics of controlling drugs. He stated that a ton of ephedrine shipped to China was worth \$50; but a ton of methamphetamines was

worth \$50,000 in the United States. He also noted the ease with which one could convert over-the-counter drugs into ephedrine. Fernandez said he knew who was producing precursor chemicals in Argentina, and that producers would soon have to re-register with the GoA to continue producing.

¶12. (c) The Minister added that Argentina signed an agreement with the Bolivian government to enhance coordination to

control precursor chemicals. He claimed that President Evo Morales was receptive to working together to fight drug trafficking along Argentina's 720 kilometer border with Bolivia. The Minister said he knew what company in Salta was shipping significant quantities of precursor chemicals into Bolivia for illegal drug processing and would crack down on it as soon as the new regulations are issued. He claimed that GOA agencies were now working together well and that MOJ and the Drug Control agencies were collaborating effectively on the new regulations. Under the proposed plan, officials from the Federal Police and the Ministry of Health would both have to verify all movements of precursor chemicals, he stated.

¶13. (C) He also recalled his earlier personal battles with Jose Ramon Granero, the head of Argentina's Drug Control agency, SEDRONAR, and Gabriel Aboud, the National Director for Controlling Precursor Chemicals, calling the latter "nefarious." He implicitly criticized Granero's resort to the press to defend SEDRONAR saying, "If Granero wants to talk, great. If not, he should keep his mouth shut." Fernandez said he had been behind the move to eliminate SEDRONAR's former sole authority over the importation of pre-cursor chemicals, saying that it was now a matter for the Ministry of Health and the federal police (though SEDRONAR also participates in the new multi-agency pre-cursor commission).

MoJ: "The Year to Fight Money Laundering"

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¶14. (C) The Ambassador expressed appreciation for the Minister's support for a new training program on bulk cash smuggling with a live exercise component. He also noted that the USG has finalized an agreement with the GoA's Ministry of Justice, Central Bank, Securities Exchange Commission, and Insurance Regulator to provide technical assistance to Argentine regulators, focused on enhancing the prevention and detection of terrorism finance. The Ambassador explained that he planned to sign the agreement with Central Bank President Martin Redrado in a low-profile ceremony. Fernandez welcomed the assistance, and agreed that the ceremony should be kept low-profile. He stated that ""this is the year to fight money laundering."" He indicated that all government agencies are now required to declare suspicious activity, and he assured the Ambassador that such activity would be investigated. He asserted that the GoA will have ""a strong response"" for the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). (Comment: We presume he was referring to the FATF mutual evaluation of Argentina scheduled in October/November of this year).

Press

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¶15. (C) After the meeting, the Ambassador and the Minister gave a joint press conference and fielded questions from print, television and radio media. Per ref A, both made strong statements condemning recent anti-Semitic violence in Buenos Aires. Fernandez said the meeting was an opportunity to discuss joint cooperation in counternarcotics, TIP, homeland security. The Ambassador thanked Minister Fernandez for the MoJ's productive cooperation on law enforcement issues. He noted that there is still much work to be done to fight organized crime, and stressed the need for convictions against criminals. When asked about a court's recent verdict to uphold the ruling party's decision to run ""symbolic candidates"" for the upcoming mid-term elections, the Minister praised and defended the decision, noting the opposition

party's right to appeal. He went on to scold the opposition for constantly complaining that Argentina's electoral system is too complicated. Despite opposition claims that voters do not know how to split ballots, he said, "voters know how to vote." The Ambassador stressed that regular elections are important to democracy and that Argentines will soon have the opportunity to vote for the candidates that will represent their interests best.

Comment

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¶16. (C) In good times and bad, Minister of Justice Anibal Fernandez has been one of the most accessible and forward-leaning member of President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's Cabinet. While other Ministers, such as Defense Minister Nilda Garre, can be problematic or prickly to work with, Minister Fernandez has welcomed USG training initiatives on a wide range of law enforcement topics. Although Minister Fernandez' high political profile as a staunch defender of Kirchner interests has generated much public skepticism about his role on security and justice issues, the fact remains that law enforcement cooperation with Argentina's security agencies under his authority has been productive.

WAYNE

=====CABLE ENDS=====